

## **Potential Aspiration Management: Essential Monitoring After a Potential Aspiration Incident**

A possible aspiration event could include but is not limited to:

- Vomiting episode when sleeping or if person is unable to move themselves into sidelying or forward to prevent inhaling vomitus
- Choking episode (airway was blocked)
- Coughing with struggle (red face, watery eyes, runny nose)
- Runny nose occurring during eating

Aspiration does not always present itself immediately following a choking incident even on x-rays. The food or fluid that gets aspirated may get into the lungs and over a few days may cause an infection. If an infection develops signs and symptoms will appear in a few days.

If a person has had a potential aspiration incident, it is important to monitor the person for the following **signs and symptoms of aspiration** for at least 7 days, and document findings in the medical record:

- Decreased food and/or fluid intake
- Refusal of meals or fluids
- Temperature elevation (check 2 times day; be sure you know what is not OK)
- Changes in respiratory rate, pulse or BP (take 2 times a day; be sure you know what is not OK)
- Difficulty breathing
- Change in general mood (i.e. more agitated or conversely more lethargic or listless, feeling tired or lack of energy)
- Skin color change (pale-gray-blue) especially in extremities, lips or fingernails
- Cough
- Chest congestion
- Change in sleeping habits—more or less

**Report any of these signs and symptoms to the person who makes health care decisions for the person and seek medical attention right away.**